



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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Oct. 31, 2006

1. Pheasant Numbers Better Than Predicted in Parts of Iowa
2. DNR Completes Record Walleye Stocking – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photos available]
3. Iowa to Hold First Modern Day Otter Season – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photos available]
4. DNR Offers Volunteers Opportunities to Give Thanks for Natural Resources
5. Two Men Face Poaching Charges in Muscatine County
6. Waterfowl Hunters Reminded to Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers
7. Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants Awarded to Iowa Rural Fire Departments
8. Hardwood Trees and Shrubs for Wildlife Habitat Available This Fall
9. Waterfowlers Watch for Trumpeter Swans on the Move
10. Natural Resource Commission to Meet Nov. 9 in Des Moines

PHEASANT NUMBERS BETTER THAN PREDICTED IN PARTS OF IOWA

BOONE – Pheasant hunters in central, north central and northwest Iowa had better than predicted success over the opening weekend of pheasant season which prompted the Iowa DNR to raise population estimates for those regions.

Todd Bogenschutz, upland biologist with the DNR, said in central, north central and northwest regions, it appears the hens had an early hatch and a good number of chicks were on their own by the time the August Roadside Survey came around.

“We thought an early hatch was a possibility, and based on what I’m hearing from our officers and staff, I’m sure that we missed the peak of the count in those regions,” he said. In 2005, pheasant counts were 63 birds per route for northwest Iowa, 43 in north central Iowa and 50 in central Iowa.

“I think our counts are right for northeast and west central Iowa,” Bogenschutz said. There are still a lot of crops in the field in southern Iowa, he said, so it may be too early to tell if those counts were off.

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[electronic photos available]

DNR COMPLETES RECORD WALLEYE STOCKING

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

CLEAR LAKE---Fall walleye stocking has been completed at Clear Lake.

According to district fisheries biologist, Jim Wahl, 40,000 advanced fingerling walleye were released into the lake during October: 22,000 9-inch advanced fingerlings were received from the Rathbun State Fish Hatchery, and an additional 18,000 6-inch advanced fingerlings were delivered from the State Fish Hatchery at Spirit Lake.

Including Clear Lake, the DNR stocked nearly 190,000 of these larger walleyes in 2006. This is the most advanced growth walleyes ever produced at Lake Rathbun. These newest aquatic residents, says Wahl, have a better than average chance for survival.

"These advanced fingerlings are in excellent body condition and have already survived the most dangerous part of their lives," said Wahl. "The availability of these large fingerlings has really added to our program. I think area anglers are very excited that we have access to this sort of fish for Clear Lake, and the future benefits should be extremely rewarding."

During late May, Clear Lake received an initial stocking of 32 million walleye fry. Given average food and weather, survivors normally take 4 years to reach the 14-inch legal length. However, due to accelerated growth rates within the hatchery environment, growing times for "artificially reared" fish is significantly reduced.

"There is currently a very good forage base in Clear Lake, and these 9-inch fingerlings could make eleven to twelve-inches by the end of next summer, and could realistically hit the 14-inch limit during their third year," said Wahl. "That sort of growth goes a long toward sustaining a quality fishery."

Advanced growth fingerlings were also stocked at Lake Rathbun, Storm Lake, Little River Lake, West Okoboji Lake, DeSoto Bend, Big Creek Lake, Lake Manawa, Black Hawk Lake, Three Mile Lake, Lake Sugema and Brushy Creek Lake.

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[electronic photos available]

IOWA TO HOLD FIRST MODERN DAY OTTER SEASON

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The Iowa trapping season begins Saturday, Nov. 4. The item creating the greatest stir this year is that, come Saturday, river otters will become legal game for the first time since the species disappeared from the state during the 1800s.

According DNR furbearer resource specialist, Ron Andrews, this year's first ever, limited season is the result of a successful restoration effort that began with the 1985 release of 16 river otters at central Iowa's Red Rock Reservoir. By the time the restoration concluded in 1993, a total of 325 otters had been released into 25 Iowa river systems. All releases were successful in establishing a viable population, and otters were soon expanding into tributary watersheds across the state. The recovery was made possible due to a three-way trade where Iowa provided wild turkeys to Kentucky and Louisiana supplied wild trapped otters to Iowa

"River otters have now increased to the point that we currently have a very sustainable population that allows us to provide recreational opportunities to Iowa trappers," said Andrews. "Some populations have even increased to where the DNR is receiving an increased number of complaints from anglers. In certain situations, such as small streams or privately owned farm ponds, there is no question that otters can have a significant impact on smallmouth bass, catfish, and northern pike. In those cases, a certain number of otters need to be harvested."

Andrews stresses that Iowa's first modern-day otter season will be extremely conservative and will not jeopardize future otter numbers. Fur harvesters [trappers] will be limited to two river otters per season, and a statewide season quota has been set at 400 otters. The season will close upon reaching the quota or January 31, 2007.

Any trapper who catches an otter must report the capture to a DNR conservation officer within 24 hours, said Andrews. Trapped otters must then be marked [tagged] by a DNR officer within 72 hours. The public can keep tabs on the 2006 otter harvest via the DNR's web site or by calling 515-281-5918 for a daily running total.

"Interest in the [otter] season is running very high," said Andrews. "I think that a lot of it is because this is the first modern-day harvest and also because otters have a significant pelt value."

Andrews estimates the value of an Iowa otter pelt at anywhere from eighty to one hundred dollars. By comparison, raccoon pelts are expected to fetch an average of ten dollars, while the value for prime mink pelts is estimated at twenty to twenty-five dollars.

"What we want people to know is that Iowa's otter harvest will be extremely limited and will be well below what it would take to have a negative impact on existing populations. This year's quota is so limited, in fact, that we fully expect river otters to continue their growth and expansion across the state," said Andrews.

For more information contact Ron Andrews at 641-425-5088.

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DNR OFFERS VOLUNTEERS OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE THANKS FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

DES MOINES — With the month of Thanksgiving upon us, Keepers of the Land, the volunteer program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), offers many opportunities for volunteers to give thanks for our natural resources.

- **Sheeder Prairie Preserve Restoration Day:** Help restore some of Iowa's prairie lands in Guthrie County on Nov. 4. Work includes clearing invasive species and seed collection. For more information, contact Brenda Vargas at 515.543.8319.
- **Polk City Range Baffling Disassembly:** Volunteers are needed to help dismantle the Charles Butch Olofson Range in Polk City. Four baffles need to be dismantled from each of the four shooting ranges throughout November. For more information, contact Michael Warman at 515.238.6977.
- **Shooting Range Attendant Opportunity:** Officials at the Banner Shooting Range are looking for range attendant volunteers Fridays - Tuesdays. For more information, please contact Rod Slings at 515.281.8652 or Megan Wisecup at 515.281.7828.
- **Air Quality Volunteer Opportunity:** Help improve the quality of Iowa's air with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Air Quality Bureau. Activities include various project management tasks. For more information, contact Jason Marcel at 515.281.4873.
- **Brush Clearing and Fence Building:** Officials at Wapsipinicon State Park in Anamosa are looking for volunteers immediately to assist in a couple park maintenance activities. For more information, contact Dennis Murphy at 319.462.2761.
- **Wilson Island Trail Maintenance:** Help officials at Wilson State Park keep their trail system in tip-top shape by volunteering for this activity. Activities include cutting and clearing brush along the trails. For more information, contact Chris Anunson at 712.642.2069.
- **Fish Habitat Days:** Help is needed building fish habitat structures on Nov. 17 and 18 at Lost Grove Lake in Scott County. For more information contact Don Kline at 319.694.2430.
- **Tire Removal:** Volunteers are requested to help remove 1,500 to 3,000 scrap tires from a shallow, wooded, dry stream bed in northeast Des Moines, near Pleasant Hill. Project needs to be completed by Dec. 31. For more information contact Jeff Geerts at 515.281.8176.

Please visit the Keepers of the Land website at www.keepersoftheland.org for information on these and more volunteer opportunities.

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us.

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TWO MEN FACE POACHING CHARGES IN MUSCATINE COUNTY

DES MOINES - Two men face 10 charges and more than \$1,900 in fines and penalties for allegedly taking ducks illegally during a hunting incident in Muscatine County this weekend, Iowa Department of Natural Resource officials said today.

Robert J. Barnes, 23, of Letts, and Lucas M. Meeker, 23, of Muscatine, were charged following the investigation, which started around 10 a. m. Sunday. Each man faces five charges, including taking migratory waterfowl over the legal daily bag limit, two counts each of taking migratory waterfowl while having possession of lead shot, taking migratory waterfowl without a federal duck stamp and criminal trespass. In addition, DNR officials requested a \$250 civil penalty from each man (\$50 per duck). Both men are scheduled to appear in Muscatine County Associate District Court Nov. 16.

The charges were filed after officials from the Muscatine County Sheriff's Department received a complaint of hunters trespassing on private property near the Cedar River northwest of Letts. A state conservation officer responded to the call, resulting in the charges against the two men.

DNR officials seized 10 mallard ducks as well as several lead shotshells. The daily bag limit for mallard ducks is four per hunter. Authorities stress that the charges are merely accusations and both men are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

The duck hunting season in the southern zone of Iowa opened on Oct. 21 and continues through Dec. 14.

###

WATERFOWL HUNTERS REMINDED TO STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS

BOONE - Boaters and anglers are continually reminded to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Now it is waterfowl hunters' turn to help stop aquatic hitchhikers and protect Iowa lakes, rivers, and wetlands.

Invasive species such as Eurasian watermilfoil, purple loosestrife, and zebra mussels can damage habitat for waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife species. These aquatic invasive species can be unintentionally transported on boats, decoys, and blind material if waterfowl hunters do not take the proper precautions to prevent their spread.

"Preventing their spread into new waters is the key to controlling aquatic invasive species in Iowa," said Kim Bogenschutz, the DNR's aquatic invasive species program coordinator.

Hunters should follow a simple set of procedures each time when leaving the water.

- Remove any visible plants, animals, or mud and drain water from decoy lines or anchors, push poles, boats, and waders before transporting.
- Switch to elliptical, bulb-shaped, or strap decoy anchors that do not collect submerged aquatic plants as easily.
- Cut cattails or other plants above the water line when used as camouflage for boats or blinds.
- Clean and dry anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, decoys, waders, dogs). Before transporting to another waterbody either:
 - Rinse your boat and equipment with hot (104 degree) water; or
 - Spray your boat and trailer with high-pressure water at a carwash; or
 - Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days.
- Learn to identify aquatic invasive species. Report any suspected infestations to the nearest DNR fisheries station.

For more information contact Kim Bogenschutz, Aquatic Nuisance Species Program Coordinator, at 515-432-2823.

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VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE GRANTS AWARDED TO IOWA RURAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

AMES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forestry bureau, in cooperation with US Forest Service - State and Private Forestry, has awarded grants to 93 of Iowa's volunteer fire departments involving \$227,729 in matching federal funds to aid their efforts in battling cropland, grass and timber wildfires. The grants offer valuable funding assistance for local volunteer fire departments to acquire wildfire suppression equipment, personal protective equipment, and communications equipment.

Gail Kantak, fire supervisor with the DNR's forestry bureau, said the following fire departments have received notification that their 2006 Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grant requests have been approved:

Arnolds Park Fire Dept; Atkins Benton Linn Fire Dist; Barnes City Fire Dept; Belle Plaine Fire Dept; Bellevue Fire Dept; Belmont Fire Dept; Blencoe Fire Dept; Buffalo Center Fire Dept; Camanche Fire Dept; Cedar / Mount Auburn Fire Dept; Chariton Fire Dept; Clarksville Fire Dept; College Springs Fire Dept; Cresco Community Fire Dept and Decorah Fire Dept.

Also Duncombe Fire Dept; Garwin Fire Dept; Glenwood Fire Dept; Goodell Fire Dept; Grand Mound Fire Dept; Grand River Fire Dept; Grinnell Fire Dept; Hamburg Fire Dept; Hampton Fire Dept; Harpers Ferry Fire Dept; Hawarden Fire Dept; Hawkeye Community Fire Dept; Hazleton Fire Dept; Humeston Fire Dept; Ida Grove Fire Dept; Ionia Fire Dept; Jefferson-Monroe Fire Dept.; Joice Fire Dept and Kamrar Fire Dept.

Also Knoxville Fire Dept; Lake View Fire Dept; Lamont Fire Dept; Lansing Fire Dept; Larrabee Fire Dept; Laurens Fire Dept; Lenox Fire Dept; Little Sioux Fire Dept; Little Sioux/Grant Twsp, Smithland Fire Dept; Lovilia Fire Dept; Lucas Fire Dept; Manchester Fire Dept; Manly Fire Dept; Mapleton Fire Dept; Marcus Fire Dept; Martelle Fire Dept; Melbourne Fire Dept; Mondamin Fire Dept; Montpelier Fire Dept and Morley Fire Dept.

Also Moulton Fire Dept; New Hampton Fire Dept; New Vienna Fire Dept; Northern Des Moines County Rural Fire Dist.; Oakville Fire Dept; Onawa Fire Dept; Otho Fire Dept; Oxford Fire Dept; Packwood Fire Dept; Parkersburg Fire Dept; Persia Fire Dept; Peterson Fire Dept; Pleasantville Emergency Services; Plymouth Fire Dept; Rake Fire Dept; Randolph Fire Dept; Riverside Fire Dept; Riverton Fire Dept and Rockwell City Fire.

Also Rowley Fire Dept; Ryan Fire Dept; Saylor Twsp Fire Dept; Sidney Fire Dept; Sigourney Fire Dept; Solon Fire Dept; Spirit Lake Fire Dept; Stanton Fire Dept; State Center Fire & EMS; Sumner Fire Dept; Superior Fire Dept; Toledo Fire Dept; Victor Fire Dept; Vining Fire Dept; Volga Community Fire Dept; Wapello Co Rural Fire Dept; Washta Fire Dept; West Branch Fire Dept; West Union Community Fire Service, Inc. and Williamsburg Fire Dept

“Grants are still available to local volunteer fire departments and communities to pay up to 50 percent of the costs to install dry fire hydrants in existing ponds to help fight fires. If a community or a region within a fire departments response area is in need of more available water sources, please consider dry hydrants as an option. They do not have to be a standard pond or water-body access,” Kantak said.

Kantak reminded all fire departments of the importance of submitting Wildland Fire Reports whenever they respond to a wildland fire or provide assistance to a prescribed or controlled wildland fire. Wildland Fire reporting forms are available at www.iowadnr.com/forestry/fire.html. Departments actively returning these reports

receive priority points for the Volunteer Fire Assistance grant applications. These wildland fire reports are compiled locally and nationally and are reported to Congress.

For more information, contact Kantak at 515-233-1161 or at gail.kantak@dnr.state.ia.us

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HARDWOOD TREES AND SHRUBS FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT AVAILABLE THIS FALL

AMES - Falling leaves not only signal changing seasons, but it also signals a great time to plant native trees and shrubs for establishing critical wildlife cover. The State Forest Nursery in Ames is offering low cost conservation seedlings of hardy hardwood trees and shrubs for fall planting.

“Fall is an outstanding time to plant, the warm days, cool nights and adequate moisture allows some root growth before the coming of winter –giving the trees and shrubs ahead start for the spring,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau. “Native hardwood trees and shrubs can be successfully established this fall until the ground freeze.”

The State Forest Nursery has 27 hardwood tree and 15 shrub species for sale as bare root conservation seedlings in two sizes – 6 to 16 inches tall and 17 to 24 inches tall.

Tree seedlings available include native oaks such as black, bur, chinkapin, red, swamp white and white, along with silver and sugar maple, sycamore, river birch, black cherry and walnut. Shrub seedlings available include arrowwood, buttonbush, chokecherry, dogwood, elderberry, hazelnut, highbush cranberry, nannyberry, ninebark, and wild plum.

Conservation seedlings are sold in units of 100 at prices ranging from \$40 to \$45 per 100 seedlings. There is a minimum order of 500 seedlings which covers approximately one acre of land with delivery available for \$5 per 100 seedlings

For those landowners interested in planting a smaller area, the State Forest Nursery offers a “Create-A-Wildlife” packet of 200 seedlings of up to 4 different tree or shrub species of your choice for \$90 plus \$10 direct shipping to your door.

To order conservation seedlings or the Create-A-Wildlife Packet contact the State Forest Nursery at Ames at 1-800-865-2477 or go on line to www.iowadnr.com/forestry/.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-242-5966 or by e-mail at john.walkowiak@dnr.state.ia.us

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WATERFOWLERS WATCH FOR TRUMPETER SWANS ON THE MOVE

CLEAR LAKE - Beware of your target before you shoot. This advice is given every year to waterfowl hunters across Iowa.

In 1994, the Iowa DNR began a trumpeter swan restoration program to bring this native species, the largest of North American waterfowl, back to the skies and wetlands of Iowa. The initial goal, to have 15 free flying nesting pair in Iowa by 2003, was met in 2004.

“Our new goal was to have 25 nesting pairs in Iowa by 2006 and we reached that in 2005,” said Ron Andrews, trumpeter swan restoration coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Iowa trumpeter swans are beginning to move around the state and there are early indications that a few trumpeters are moving in from Minnesota. Hunters are asked to help the DNR by policing their own ranks so that trumpeter swans are not mistakenly shot for snow geese or intentionally shot by poachers. If you see someone shooting a trumpeter swan contact the local conservation as soon as possible. Each officer has a cell phone.

“There is actually no excuse for shooting trumpeter swans by mistake. Unlike snow geese whose outer primary feathers are black, adult trumpeters are completely white except their black bills and feet. Young trumpeters are solid gray,” Andrews said. Trumpeters weigh up to 35 pounds and have a long neck. Snow geese weigh up to 5 pounds and are about 1/4 to 1/3 the size of trumpeters. Throughout most of the state, snow geese are relatively few in numbers. “If you see a glint of a white bird while waterfowl hunting be sure of your target before you shoot. Anymore most white waterfowl may well be trumpeters,” he said.

“We truly appreciate the assistance waterfowlers have given us in apprehending waterfowl poachers in the past and for their contributions to wildlife management with the purchase of their licenses, stamps, and the excise taxes they pay on their sporting equipment. That money funds more than 80 percent of the trumpeter swan restoration project,” Andrews said.

Shooting a trumpeter swan can result in a \$1,500 citation and the loss of hunting license privileges.

For more information contact Ron Andrews at 641-425-5088.

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NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET NOV. 9 IN DES MOINES

DES MOINES - The Natural Resource Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet at 8:30 a.m., Nov. 9, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., in Des Moines. The meeting is open to the public.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Randy Duncan, Carol Kramer, Richard Francisco, Janice Marcantonio, Lennis Moore and Liz Garst. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the November meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of Oct. 12 Meeting
- Director's Remarks
- Construction Projects
- Big Creek State Park, Polk County – Trail Program Building
- Sugema Fish and Wildlife Area (WMA), Van Buren County – Pole Storage Building
- Otter Creek WMA (Kunch Tract), Tama County – Wetland Construction
- Lacey Keosauqua State Park, Van Buren County – Water and Wastewater System
 - Land Acquisition
- Algific Talus Slope, Bear Creek, Fayette County - Daisy
- Conservation Easements
- Conservation and Recreation Donations
- Contested Case – Appeal of Proposed Decision – William J. Hubbard, Jr.
- Contract – Survey of Iowans' Willingness to Pay for Natural Resource Conservation
- Final Rule – Chapter 67, Development and Management of Recreation Trails on State Forest, Parks, Preserves and Recreation Areas
- Timber Sales
 - Shimek State Forest – Donnellson Unit, Lee County
 - Stephens State Forest, Lucas County
- Final Rule – Chapter 81, Sport Fishing Rule
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 87, Mussel Regulations
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 94 – Nonresident Deer Hunting
- Agreement with City of Emmetsburg
- Agreement with Lake Delhi Recreation Association
- Meeting Dates and Locations for 2007
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, Dec. 14, in Des Moines

For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.

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